

and the President of the United States. This dwarfs all other matters before this Congress. With all due respect, the Senate spending several weeks on the Small Business Innovation Research Act, the Federal Aviation Administration's bill, and now the Economic Development Revitalization Act has left little time for the debate that ought to be undertaken on this floor in continuous fashion to address this fiscal situation. The crisis has implications for the future of our country, the future of this Nation.

The rapid escalation of the deficit and debt requires our full engagement—not later but now. The growing consensus among those who have given serious analysis to our fiscal plight calls for an all-of-the-above approach in addressing the problem, including—dare I say it—entitlement spending, which essentially is Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare.

If Congress and the White House are serious about preventing the destruction of our economy, it is time we get serious about talking about entitlements, including Medicare, because the hard truth is that if Medicare is not included in the debate, any effort to put together any kind of a credible plan necessary to bring about fiscal stability will be defeated.

Medicare has proven to be the greatest fiscal challenge facing this country. It alone last year took in \$1.8 trillion of new liabilities, which is more than we spend on all nondefense discretionary spending. Nondefense discretionary spending is that spending which goes to every other function of the Federal Government other than interest on our national debt and mandatory spending.

The Medicare trustees recently sounded alarm bells in a report announcing that the program's total of unfunded future obligations is a staggering \$38.4 trillion. They cautioned that the hospital trust fund, known as Medicare Part A, will be exhausted by 2024. This is 5 years earlier than what they had predicted just a year earlier. So 1 year has passed, and the trustees are now so alarmed they are saying we are going to run out of money 5 years earlier than we thought. What are they going to say next year? They will probably shorten that time even more.

Economists and policy experts on both sides of the aisle—Republican, Democratic, conservative, liberal—have been warning about the dangers of Medicare spending and the impact on our national debt for years. Yet Congress has punted its responsibilities, saying “we will take care of it after the next election.”

Back in 2006, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan warned lawmakers, saying that Medicare spending is unsustainable and could one day drive debt and government interest rates substantially higher. I suggest that date is here, and this crisis is knocking on our door.

Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute,

said: Nothing presents as great a threat to the Federal budget—and therefore to economic growth—as the persistent and rapid growth of Medicare spending.

At a White House summit last year, President Obama recognized the unsustainability of entitlement spending. This is a quote from our President:

Almost all of the long-term deficit and debt that we face relates to the exploding costs of Medicare and Medicaid. Almost all of it. That is the single biggest driver of our federal debt. And if we don't get control over that, we can't get control over our federal budget.

I am quoting the words of the President of the United States, who now has taken the position that we shouldn't address the Medicare problem. Yet, as President, he has said that almost all of the deficit and debt we face relates to the exploding costs of these two programs, Medicare and Medicaid. He repeats it by saying “almost all of it” and “the single biggest driver of our Federal debt.”

Alice Rivlin, who served as budget director under President Bill Clinton, said it best: “There's no mystery about what we ought to do, we just need to get on with it.”

Madam President, we just need to get on with it. But that hasn't happened. Despite the President's own recognition of the single biggest driver of our Federal debt and despite the warning sirens from economists and even the Medicare trustees, the President has yet to submit a single proposal to address this urgent problem.

Others in positions of leadership have also decided to ignore these critical warnings about Medicare and its looming insolvency and threat to our fiscal house. They have rejected any proposals for changing Medicare as we know it. Well, the category for these people are the “do-nothings.”

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has used 10 minutes.

Mr. COATS. I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COATS. Let me skip forward here.

Despite the President's own recognition of this problem, we have not taken this plan forward. There are do-nothings who think that if we do not act, Medicare will be secure. Actually, the do-nothings are the ones who are making Medicare's future unstable. It is those who have taken the responsibility to stand up and recognize this problem and be free and open in debate and honest with the American people who are the ones who have had the courage to go forward. Yet they get reviled for “throwing grandma under the bus” or taking Medicare away.

I was approached by a person in a factory in Indiana who came up to me and said: You are taking away my 88-year-old mother's health care. He was upset, and rightfully so, but I told him

he is upset at the wrong person because we are trying to save that health care. We are trying to save Medicare.

We have two options: We can either continue with the status quo and let Medicare go bankrupt or we can step up to the plate, debate thoughtful proposals, and work to keep our promise to America's seniors by enacting meaningful reform. It is those of us who are willing to step up to the plate who are here to save Medicare, not destroy Medicare. It is those who are saying we need to do nothing or who refuse to do anything who are going to cause Medicare to go bankrupt and take benefits away from seniors.

This is the debate we need to have. We are burdened by this. We need to address it. It is the challenge of the day. Let's go forward, stand up, and do the right thing.

I appreciate the extension of time.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business and that I be followed by Senator COBURN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ETHANOL

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the amendment offered by my colleague, the Senator from Oklahoma, to the Economic Development Revitalization Act which would repeal the volumetric ethanol excise tax credit. His amendment is No. 436.

For months, there has been very heated public debate surrounding the blender tax credit for ethanol and the tariff on imported ethanol. Some of my colleagues advocate repealing ethanol tax incentives immediately, while others are adamantly opposed to changing course on tax policy that was enacted at the end of the last Congress and would extend these tax credits through the end of this year. Regardless, it is clear that Congress must make a decision on whether to reform the ethanol blenders tax credit and import tariff this year.

In my home State of Georgia, I see both the positive and the negative effects this tax policy has had. While it has spurred the growth of the ethanol industry, some say it has caused drastic increases in the price of corn-based feedstock.

A new study prepared for the upcoming G20 meeting shows that biofuel subsidies are directly related to food price volatility. I believe that because the credit is set to expire in December of this year and many ethanol producers have the credit embedded in their business plans, Congress should not immediately repeal the tax credit. When it expires at the end of this year—even though I have supported this tax credit for all the years I have

served in both the House and the Senate—I think the time has come for it to end. If we tell the blenders today that at the end of this year this tax credit is going to expire, it needs to expire then. So I do not intend to support an extension of that tax credit beginning upon the expiration at the end of this year.

Regardless of where one stands on the underlying issue itself, I believe the amendment deserves to have a vote on its merits and not be blocked by procedural tactics. Because so much attention has been paid to the issue and because we have had such extensive debates, this amendment deserves an up-or-down vote, rather than being stopped by a filibuster. For this reason, I intend to vote in favor of the motion to invoke cloture on the amendment of the Senator from Oklahoma, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. I yield the floor.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, may I make an inquiry of the Chair?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. How much time remains for the Republicans in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 15 minutes 20 seconds.

Mr. COBURN. I thank the Chair.

These are interesting days in our country. We find ourselves in a very deep hole, and it is not the fault of the people; it is the fault of the Congress. We continue to spend money we do not have on things we do not need. When we do that personally, we end up filing bankruptcy. Pretty soon, we run out of new credit cards to take on, and we get to the point where we can't pay our debts. That is a question that is in front of our country today as our economy is struggling and we have this massive debt. We ought to be about every small, medium, and large step we can take to solve the problem, not to solve the problem by saying we can't pay our bills but to solve the problem so we create a prosperous future for our kids and those who follow us.

There is a lot of controversy over the amendment I offered, and it is inaccurately claimed by the majority leader that this amendment was rule XIV'd. It was not rule XIV'd. According to the procedures of the Senate, you can file cloture on any amendment at any time. That is a privilege every Senator has. Why would somebody file cloture on an amendment? It is because, over the first 5½ months of this year, through the leadership of the Senate, we have been unable to have a free and open debate and free and open offering of amendments. Because the procedure is rarely used does not mean it is not ethical and not accurate. As a matter of fact, the reason the procedure was put there was in case at a point in time your rights as a Senator to offer amendments are being limited by the majority. That is why we have this rule. Because you can take 16 of your colleagues and file a cloture petition and, therefore, have a vote on your amendment.

So what we are hearing going on in the background today is, the reason you shouldn't vote for this amendment, even though you agree we should get rid of and save \$3 billion, much as the Senator from California outlined, \$3 billion that the very people who are blending and receiving the \$3 billion don't want, the argument is, it is because they don't like the way the amendment came to the floor. Explain to the people at home, you have an opportunity to save this country \$3 billion and you know it is the right policy, but you are not going to vote for it because you don't like the way the amendment came to the floor. I would remind my colleagues that of the \$3 billion we are going to save, 1.2 billion of it we are going to borrow from China, if we go on and spend it, and we are going to charge that 1.2 billion to our kids and grandkids. The interesting point is, we have grown, over 20-some years, to rely on ethanol for 7 percent of our fuel, and it has been a very expensive process. It is expensive directly because when you go to buy gasoline today, it is not the price you pay at the pump that you are actually paying. Take all the subsidies and all the tax credits and all the low-interest loans and all the nonrepayment of all the grants and all the moneys that have been put into this program, and when you buy that tank of gas, every gallon that you put into your car after you pay for it, you already paid \$1.72 through your taxes to have that gallon there.

So we are not getting rid of the mandate on ethanol. It is 7½ percent. It has helped us in some ways. It is a very inefficient fuel that causes us to consume more fuel, produce more CO₂. But the fact is, we have an amendment in the Chamber that is designed to take away a subsidy, and the only reason we are taking away the subsidy is because in law we are saying you have to do it anyway.

I would introduce, for the record, a letter from the refiners that states—this is the National Petroleum Refiners Association, representing 97 percent of the people who get this tax credit—97 percent of the \$3 billion. They say they don't want the \$3 billion. The vote is going to come down to something very clear. We are going to give \$3 billion to some of the most profitable companies in America or we are not. The interesting fact is, they are saying: Please don't give it to us. Please don't give us this money.

Think of the time when we are borrowing the money to give to them and they are saying don't give it to us. We are going to have a vote in the Chamber and very likely not win because of a procedure or because of parochial interests. The fact is, every gallon of ethanol that is blended to gasoline, whoever does the blending, gets 45 cents a gallon, and they don't need it because they are going to blend it anyway. So the real question is, Will we continue to be ignorant in Washington of the

common sense the American people want us to have? The common sense is, if you are paying somebody to do something and by law they have to do it anyway and then they write you a letter and say: Please don't pay me anymore to do this, I am going to do it anyway, why would we continue to send them the money? Why would we continue to do that, especially when 40 percent of it we have to borrow from the Chinese to be able to pay it to the American oil company? It makes no sense. There is no logic you can come up with. The calculations out of Iowa State University on this \$3 billion is that the amount of jobs that have come out of this in the past cost \$14 million a year per job—14 million a year per job created out of this subsidy.

No wonder we are broke. No wonder we are failing financially. No wonder we are failing our children and our grandchildren, because we continue to do things that don't have any correlation with logic or common sense. I know the arguments. I know the argument is that, well, we passed this last year as part of the extension. Well, as a Republican, I was one of the few Republicans who did not vote for that extension. Because not only did we pass additional tax cuts and additional unpaid programs, we cut no spending to be able to pay for it. So what we did was borrow a whole bunch more money and not solve any of the critical issues that lie in front of our country.

Forty percent of last year's corn crop went to ethanol. As a matter of fact, there is so much ethanol production, last year we shipped 400 million gallons overseas. That is great, except when you take the time to think about that with that 400 million gallons, we sent \$500 million worth of subsidy. So now we are subsidizing the ethanol that goes to Europe with your tax dollars so they can have cheaper gasoline than we have, because they are taking \$1.72 per gallon and getting the benefit of our tax dollars to have cheaper ethanol in Europe than they can get from other places.

So there is nothing about this that makes sense, other than if you are a wonk and study the politics and the procedures and the parochialism that goes on inside the political body. That is what has gotten us into trouble. We are more interested in power and position and party. I am sick of both parties. We better start focusing on the real problems in front of our country. We are going to have a \$1.7 trillion deficit this year, and the way you get rid of that is 1 billion or 2 billion or 3 billion at a time.

Here is something that makes absolutely no sense. Here is something that has no true demand for it. Here is something that is \$3 billion that the people we are paying it to say they don't want, and we are not going to take them up on it? What part of stupid are we? This is like a Ferrell movie. It doesn't make sense. It is comedic.

We have had a lot of debate. Let me just talk for a minute about what is going on in the agricultural community throughout this country if you are a poultry, milk or livestock producer.

You can't bring your cattle to feedlots right now because corn is too expensive—\$7.65 a bushel yesterday. You can't afford to fatten your cattle, so they are not bringing them in from the range. We are slaughtering dairy cows all across this country because 70 percent of the cost of dairy cattle is the corn you feed them. We are going to get all sorts of untoward interruptions and price increases in our food if we continue this policy. Seventy percent of the cost for chickens is feed. We are having chicken processors close and go into bankruptcy. We are having chicken raisers, the actual chicken farms—a lot in Oklahoma, a lot in Arkansas, a lot throughout the South, even over in Delaware and in Virginia—can't afford to feed the chickens. So what is going to happen because we have this false subsidy? The fact is, right now, 15 percent of the food increases in this country that you have seen in the last year are directly associated with this policy—directly associated with this policy. That doesn't have any effect on the fact that what could we do by sending \$7 corn out of this country to our balance of payments, which would help our trade imbalance? Instead, we are burning it, and it is a highly inefficient fuel. It is a highly inefficient fuel. Everybody knows that when they fill up with 15 percent or 10 percent ethanol, they get much poorer gas mileage. Everybody knows that. In Oklahoma, we have all these stations where it says "ethanol free." Why do people pay 10 or 15 cents more a gallon? Because they win on mileage. They actually get better performance when they don't have ethanol in their fuel. We all know that. It is just in some States you don't have that option. We are fortunate. We can still buy real gas.

I understand we have about 3 minutes remaining. I will close with the following statement. This is going to be a historic vote, not about ethanol, not about subsidies. It is going to be a historic vote that sends a signal to the American people. Either the people in Washington get it and are going to stop wasting money on programs they don't need to waste money on and they are going to start acting in the best long-term interests of the country, they are either going to do that or they are not. So when we see the results of this vote, you are going to have a hard time explaining: I voted against that because I didn't like the way the amendment came up. The fact is, here is \$3 billion we don't have to spend over the next 6 months. If we don't spend it, that is \$3 billion we are not going to have to borrow from our children and that they are not going to be paying interest on for the next 30 years.

This comes down to the point in time, does this Senate recognize the

amount of trouble we are in, and are Senators willing to give up parochial interests, procedural interests, are they willing to do what is necessary to put this country back on course? My hope and prayer is they are.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENERGY

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise this morning to talk about America's energy future. The reality is we need a diversified energy future. What I mean by that is we need to develop all of our energy resources. In my home State of North Dakota, we are doing just that. We have coal, and we are developing clean coal technologies. We have oil and gas. We have hydro. We have biofuels—ethanol and biodiesel. We have solar. We have wind. We have biomass. We are working aggressively to develop all of them, both traditional sources of energy and our renewable sources of energy.

Ten years ago, in 2000 when I started as Governor of North Dakota, we set a course to develop a comprehensive energy plan to develop all of our energy resources, both traditional and renewable, and to do it in tandem, by encouraging private investment that would spur the development of new technologies—new technologies to develop traditional sources of energy and renewable sources of energy, and create new and exciting synergistic partnerships that would both diversify our energy mix, help us produce more energy most cost effectively, create good-quality jobs and improve environmental stewardship.

That is exactly what is happening. That is exactly what is happening in our State. That is exactly what we need to do as a nation. Let me give you some examples from our State. Oil and gas. Oil and gas development has taken off in North Dakota. We are now the fourth largest oil-producing State in the Union. We recently passed States such as Oklahoma and Louisiana, producing more oil, and we are producing it from new formations such as the Bakken Shale and the Three Forks, and we are doing it with new technologies: directional and horizontal drilling. We figured out how to use those technologies such as directional drilling and hydraulic fracturing in new ways that produce more energy but do it with good environmental stewardship. For example, in the case of hydraulic fracturing, we recycle the water. We go down 2 miles underground, we drill directionally underground for miles. So it is a small footprint. One well now produces what maybe 10 or 12 wells used to produce. The water we use to force the oil to the surface we send back down; we recycle it—we use it again—and ultimately we put it back down the hole where we drew it from in the first place when it came up with much of the oil that is produced.

In the case of coal, we take lignite coal and we produce synthetic natural gas. We put it in pipelines and we send it to other parts of the country, just like the gas you pull out of the ground. At the same time, in one of our plants, we are capturing CO₂, the carbon dioxide. We are capturing it, we are compressing it, we are putting it in pipelines, and we are sending it off to the oilfields for second or tertiary oil recovery.

Those are some of the new developments we are undertaking in traditional sources of energy. But as we do that with things such as oil and gas and coal, we are also developing the renewables. For example, wind. Our State is now the ninth largest wind energy State of all 50. We are continuing to move up the ranks, and that includes investing billions of dollars to make it happen. Again, that is more energy for our country, from more diversified sources, creating good jobs in the process.

Think how important that is. Think how important it is to create good jobs at a time when we have more than 9 percent unemployment, 15-plus million people out of work, an economy that we need to get going and growing. Energy development represents an incredible opportunity to make that happen. But when we talk about energy development, we need all of the different sources of energy. Each has strengths and each has weaknesses. That is why we need the mix.

In our State we also produce biofuels: ethanol and biodiesel. Clearly the discussion today is how do we best create that environment to continue the development, the production, and the growth of ethanol in a way that is cost effective, that serves the taxpayers of the country, but continues to develop that vital industry for our country at a time when we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, when we need more domestically produced energy, when we need quality jobs, when we need a growing economy.

We can do it. We can do it with the right kind of energy policy—with the right kind of energy policy—and that is what we are talking about today. Think about ethanol. It helps reduce our dependence on foreign oil. For every gallon of ethanol we use as part of the fuel mix, that is 1 less gallon of gasoline we are bringing in from the Middle East, and by increasing supply we help reduce the cost of gasoline at the pump for our consumers.

In addition to that, we are creating good-paying American jobs. In 2010, the ethanol industry employed 400,000 workers in good jobs throughout the United States—400,000 jobs. It provided an important market for American farmers throughout our country. It displaced the need for 445 million barrels of foreign oil. Let me repeat that. It displaced the need for 445 million barrels of foreign oil. It reduced the price of gasoline at the pump by 80 cents a gallon for the American consumer.